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FM (b)(3):10 USC 424

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SUBJ: THIS IS IR (b)(3):10 USC 424

1. ARGENTINA (AR)
2. (b)(3):10 USC 424
3. (U) POLITICAL - GENERAL VIOLA'S VIEWS ON CURRENT SITUATION
4. N/A
5. 770819
6. 770826
7. 770819, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA
8. INITIATIVE
9. (b)(3):10 USC 424
10.
11. NO
12. & 13. (b)(3):10 USC 424

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14. MAJ GEN ROBERT E. VIOLA
15. DIRC: NO; ~~NOFORN TO AVOID EMBARRASSMENT TO HOST GOVT~~
16. SUMMARY: ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF VIOLA, IN CONVERSATIONS WITH CODEL, SAID SECURITY SITUATION IS RAPIDLY IMPROVING, BUT ADMITTED THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO EXERT GREATER CONTROL OVER SECURITY FORCES. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED PRESIDENT VIDELA'S SINCERE CONCERN FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ARGENTINE CITIZENS AND STRESSED THAT VIDELA ENJOYED STRONG SUPPORT IN THE ARMY.

2. DETAILS: 1. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ MAJ. GENERAL VIOLA, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, WAS THE SENIOR ARGENTINE MILITARY OFFICER PRESENT AT A RECEPTION HOSTED ON 19 AUGUST BY THE CHARGE FOR VISITING CODEL YATRON. THE VIEWS WHICH HE EXPRESSED IN SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW.

2. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ VIOLA STATED THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION WAS IMPROVING RAPIDLY AND THAT THE SUBVERSIVES WERE ON THE RUN. HE CAUTIONED THAT WHILE HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION WOULD CONTINUE TO IMPROVE, HE FULLY EXPECTED INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF TERORISM SUCH AS BOMBINGS, ASSASSINATIONS, AND KIDNAPPINGS TO CONTINUE, BUT AT A REDUCED RATE.
3. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ AT ONE POINT Sec. 3.3(b) (1) THAT THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME OF THE RECENT MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES OF JOURNALISTS AND LAWYERS COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO ACTION BY ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES, INCLUDING THE POLICE. Sec. 3.3(b) (1) WHETHER GENERAL VIOLA CONSIDERD THIS APPARENT LACK OF CONTROL OF CERTAIN "HARD-LINE" ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES TO BE A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO GENERAL VIDELA AND HIS MODERATE GOVERNMENT. VIOLA ADMITTED THAT THERE ARE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE SECURITY FORCES THAT ARE TRYING TO EMBARRASS PRESIDENT VIDELA AND DISCREDIT HIS GOVERNMENT, AND THAT THIS IS RECOGNIZED AS A SERIOUS CHALLENGE. HE WANTED TO ASSURE ~~OTHERS PRESENT~~, Sec. 3.3(b) (1) HOWEVER, THAT STRONG MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO BRING ALL ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES UNDER CONTROL AND THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THIS WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME.

4. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ ANOTHER POINT STRESSED BY GENERAL VIOLA WAS THE SINCERE CONCERN WHICH PRESIDENT VIDELA HAS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL CITIZENS. HE

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REMARKED THAT HE AND THE PRESIDENT HAVE BEEN CLOSE PERSONAL FRIENDS SINCE THEIR DAYS AS CLASSMATES AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY AND THAT THROUGH THE YEARS GENERAL VIDELA HAS ALWAYS BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS - CERTAINLY LONG BEFORE THE SUBJECT EMERGED AS A CORNERSTONE OF US FOREIGN RELATIONS. HE WENT ON TO PREDICT THAT WITH THE SUBVERSIVES ON THE RUN EMPHASIS COULD BE GIVEN TO REBUILDING THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND RETURNING TO A RULE OF LAW.

5. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ ONE POINT WHICH GENERAL VIOLA REPEATED IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS WAS THAT, IN SPITE OF PRESS REPORTS AND RUMORS TO THE CONTRARY, GENERAL VIDELA IS IN FIRM CONTROL OF THE ARMY AND THERE IS NO SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO HIS AUTHORITY WITHIN THE ARMY.

COMMENT: ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ GENERAL VIOLA WAS OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN TALKING WITH AS MANY MEMBERS OF THE CODEL AS POSSIBLE AND IN GETTING HIS VIEWS ACROSS. HE RESPONDED TO ALL QUESTIONS IN AN OPEN AND FRANK MANNER, BUT CONTINUED TO RETURN TO THE POINTS REPORTED ABOVE. WHILE THERE IS PROBABLY MORE OPPOSITION TO VIDELA WITHIN THE ARMY THAN VIOLA WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE, THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY GREAT DANGER OF HIS BEING OVERTHROWN. RATHER, WITH EACH PASSING DAY IT APPEARS THAT THE PRESENT MILITARY JUNTA WILL CONTINUE TO GOVERN UNTIL ITS SELF-APPOINTED TERM ENDS IN MARCH OF 1979. AT THAT TIME A NEW JUNTA MUST TAKE POWER AND THAT MIGHT ALSO BE THE MOST CONVENIENT TIME TO ALTER THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, BY BRINGING IN A "FOURTH MAN" OR INTRODUCING SOME OTHER INNOVATION. IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT VIDELA MUST ACT FORCEFULLY TO BRING ALL OF THE SECURITY FORCES UNDER TIGHTER CONTROL. ALTHOUGH VIOLA WAS CONFIDENT THAT THIS WOULD BE DONE IN THE SHORT TERM, IT WILL PROBABLY BE A VERY DIFICULT TASK AND COULD TAKE MUCH LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED. THE ANNUAL PROMOTIONS AND FORCED RETIREMENTS OF GENERALS, TO BE DETERMINED IN THE NEXT MONTH OR SO, WILL GIVE AN INDICATION OF HOW SUCCESSFUL VIDELA WILL BE IN FORCING OUT HARD LINE GENERALS AND SUBSTITUTING MORE MODERATE ONES. THIS MSG COORD W/EMBASSY.

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